

2005 Food Aid Export Conference  
Kansas City  
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May 5, 2005

It's an honor to address you this morning in my new capacity as Director of the Center of Faith-Based & Community Initiatives at the Agency for International Development. Some of you may know that I spent the past three years as Deputy Assistant Administrator in USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict & Humanitarian Assistance, which is where Food for Peace is located. So, I've had the privilege of meeting some of you -- from industry, the associations and, of course, our friends in the NGO community.

With my previous position, and during more than a decade working on Capitol Hill, I have had the privilege of traveling to the developing world many times to see the outstanding work which all of you play an important part in. As recently as February, I visited Title II activities in Honduras. I have seen countless such activities in scores of countries and I always come away feeling proud about the U.S. Government's role in this lifesaving endeavor.

It also makes me proud as a taxpayer. Feeding hungry people over the horizon in hard to get to and often dangerous places requires dedication and teamwork. None of this could happen without the support of the taxpayers. It wouldn't happen without U.S. farmers producing top quality commodities. The millers and shippers are key players. And of course, we have to recognize the NGO workers working under very difficult circumstances. Whether you're working with a faith-based organization or a secular humanitarian group, your work has been a blessing to millions.

So, before I go any further, I want to make sure that everyone here understands how deeply the Bush Administration appreciates your work -- especially those of us at USAID and USDA, because we have a unique and up close and personal relationship with your activities. You are making the lives of some of the world's most desperately poor people a little easier and sometimes you are literally saving their lives. It's an important and tangible reminder to the rest of world about American values. In this day and age that is a critical mission and you are doing a superb job. So, I thank you.

Now then, it's probably not a surprise to this audience to learn that of all the offices, bureaus and programs at USAID, faith-based organizations have had the most success with the Office of Food for Peace; and this preceded the election of President Bush and the creation of the Faith-Based & Community Initiative. It's not always perfect – in fact, I have run up against troubling obstacles a time or two myself, and we are aggressively working to eliminate them.

But, the facts speak for themselves: the U.S. Government has worked through faith-based organizations to deliver food aid overseas even before the establishment of the Agency for International Development. And this past year alone, faith-based and community organizations were the beneficiaries of more than \$400 million of Title II assistance. Now, that's a lot of money, but it's even more impressive when you consider that the total amount of USAID funding – coming from all of our many programs -- flowing through faith-based and community organizations -- was approximately \$550 million. In other words, Food for Peace alone accounts for more than 70 percent of USAID support for faith-based and community organizations.

So you're probably wondering if it's even possible or appropriate to do more. And here is my response: it is not our intention to shift resources away from non-faith-based organizations that are doing good work. We value all of our partners. What we want is simply fairness and a level playing field. And that takes constant review of regulations, bureaucratic procedures, requests for applications, and it also requires that we do everything we can to make sure that groups motivated by their faith get as fair a hearing as other organizations do at USAID.

Our goal as an agency is to provide the highest quality assistance to as many people as we can in the most effective and efficient manner. And sometimes that means working through our wonderful secular partners; sometimes it means supporting faith-based organizations; sometimes it means providing donations to the World Food Program; and sometimes it means working through indigenous groups – while helping to build their capacity -- so that they'll be able to continue doing good work long after your organization has left the country and U.S. funding has shifted elsewhere.

And this is the point I want bring home to you today. Ironically, where you'd think it'd be hard to improve upon is actually an area of great opportunity. I believe there is enough room in Food for Peace for a greater diversity of American faith-based NGOs. But more importantly, there are countless indigenous organizations -- many of them faith-based -- working at the grassroots either feeding hungry people or working with networks they established themselves to address food security, health and HIV/AIDS, education or economic development needs.

Some American NGOs already partner with such organizations -- I have witnessed your partnerships firsthand and have come away impressed. But I am persuaded that we have only scratched the surface and an enormous wellspring of energy and talent is not being fully utilized. Certainly these small indigenous, often faith-based community organizations can benefit from our technical know-how and funding. But more importantly, I believe that we have more to gain from their on-the-ground experience and their unwavering commitment that only comes from helping a neighbor.

Whether you work for an NGO or Food for Peace or USDA, I urge you to seek out such partners. Not because they need us (the quality organizations I refer to have been around for years and get by just fine). But because we need them, and more to the point, it's the hungry people we seek to help who will benefit the most from such a partnership.

I'd like to tell you about one of these homegrown groups -- a group I visited recently -- and one which is similar to many that you run into throughout the developing world. This group, to my knowledge, doesn't want any food aid; I don't even think there is an obvious food aid angle. And I mention that on purpose because I don't want you to think that I'm lobbying for one particular group, or for my faith-based friends to think I'm favoring one group over another, because I am not. But the history of the Christian Medical Center in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India is inspiring and instructive, and it is a story worth telling.

It all started with one young American woman named Ida Scudder who was the daughter of missionaries in India at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. She had seen firsthand the immense suffering caused by famine, disease and poverty. It didn't take long after enrolling in a U.S. college, for her to decide never to return to India. But life intervened and Ida was forced to return temporarily to care for her ailing mother shortly after graduation.

One evening after her return, a distinguished Brahmin gentleman knocked on the door of her father's house and specifically asked for Ida. His wife was suffering in childbirth and the midwife could do nothing. He assumed that Ida was a doctor and wanted her help. Ida had to explain that she wasn't a doctor, but she offered to get her father. But that would not do. The gentleman explained it would be a great shame upon his family for another man to treat his wife. It would be better -- more honorable -- if she died.

A short time later that same night, there was another knock on the door this time from a Muslim gentleman. He had virtually the same problem – his wife was having trouble in childbirth and he wanted Ida to assist. When Ida explained that she wasn't a doctor and volunteered her father, the gentleman reminded her that no man outside his family had ever seen his wife's face. He came seeking help from a woman, not a man, and so he left.

Again, there was a knock and, as I am sure you have guessed, it was another gentleman with virtually the same story. But this time, Ida knew the man and his wife. They lived nearby and he had worked for her father in years past. Nevertheless, the same scene was replayed for a third time – and you know what happened.

The next day she learned that all three women and their babies had died in childbirth. Ida Scudder had grown up amid a lot of pain and suffering, but nothing struck her as deeply as this episode.

I suppose it isn't surprising that, as a daughter of missionaries, Ida Scudder took what happened that tragic evening as having a higher meaning. In fact, she considered it a calling for her to do something to improve the lot of these suffering people – especially the women and children.

And that is how the Christian Medical Center was started. Ida Scudder went back to school, became a doctor and returned to India. After a few years of treating people in their homes a small hospital was built.

That was over 100 years ago, and today, CMC, as it is known, has grown to 2,000 beds serving 85,000 inpatients and 1.3 million outpatients annually. It treated 200,000 people through various community health activities and delivered 12,000 babies last year. It has a staff of 5,500,

including 660 doctors, 1,700 nurses, 210 teachers and 900 technical staff. They even have 24 social workers.

While CMC gets virtually no Indian government support it is one of the most well respected hospitals in the country and its school is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 160 medical schools in India.

The school deserves special mention. Ida Scudder founded CMC medical school specifically to train women doctors and nurses. This was a bold initiative for the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, especially in India. Now, you can find about 100 nursing students there at any given time. Its doctors are prized all over South Asia, not only for their medical skills and professionalism, but because of they are committed to helping the poor.

Today, 100 percent of CMC's staff is Indian. Private American citizens continue to provide generous support to the hospital, but American doctors long since departed because they weren't needed. CMC applied and received modest funding through USAID's American Schools and Hospitals Abroad program after it had already been successfully operating for about 80 years, and I am not aware that USAID has ever provided any other support. Nevertheless, if you were to ask anyone within 100 miles about CMC they will warmly refer to it simply as "the American hospital."

It is obvious to me that USAID and our longtime partners would be foolish not to take advantage of what an institution like the Christian Medical Center has to offer. Think of the platform it offers for HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention activities in the Indian region suffering from the highest infection rate. Think of the lessons learned gleaned from 100 years of pioneering women's education and empowerment activities and community health programs that we could benefit from. And think of the positive messages such organizations impart about American values and our relationship to the rest of the world.

These activities were started well before anyone had ever heard of "empowering women" or "community health" and 50 years before USAID even existed. The tiny village of Vallore has grown into a city of more than 400,000, and the main engine for economic growth has been the Christian Medical Center. USAID couldn't have designed or maintained a more successful sustainable economic growth program.

You will run into organizations such as the Christian Medical Center in virtually every developing country. Many receive support from abroad, but most of them don't get a penny from the U.S. Government or from large international NGOs. They very likely are connected to missionaries or local faith communities. And they have at least as much to offer us as we have to offer them. By partnering with them we will help more needy people because our activities will be more effective and efficient and because we'll catch a renewed sense of excitement and enthusiasm.

The challenges of famine and HIV/AIDS in particular are overwhelming and can only be defeated if we bring everyone into the fight, especially those willing to make long term commitments and whose work is not only their vocation, but their life's mission.

For those in the NGO community here today who already partner with faith-based and community groups you are to be commended. And I hope you will continue and expand those partnerships. For the rest – including my colleagues at USAID and USDA -- I encourage you to reach out to these fine organizations. Don't limit your imagination or limit the outstanding work these groups can do by putting them in a box labeled "religious groups only." We are all in this endeavor together and we need to be expanding our territory and expanding our universe of partners. So, I urge you to give it a try. You, and the people you serve, will be glad that you did.